



## On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life

By Sara Ahmed

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**On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life** By Sara Ahmed

What does diversity do? What are we doing when we use the language of diversity? Sara Ahmed offers an account of the diversity world based on interviews with diversity practitioners in higher education, as well as her own experience of doing diversity work. Diversity is an ordinary, even unremarkable, feature of institutional life. Yet diversity practitioners often experience institutions as resistant to their work, as captured through their use of the metaphor of the "brick wall." *On Being Included* offers an explanation of this apparent paradox. It explores the gap between symbolic commitments to diversity and the experience of those who embody diversity. Commitments to diversity are understood as "non-performatives" that do not bring about what they name. The book provides an account of institutional whiteness and shows how racism can be obscured by the institutionalization of diversity. Diversity is used as evidence that institutions do not have a problem with racism. *On Being Included* offers a critique of what happens when diversity is offered as a solution. It also shows how diversity workers generate knowledge of institutions in attempting to transform them.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

“Ahmed’s book is not a how-to guide to ‘what works.’ But *On Being Included* would be an excellent choice for a faculty-staff reading group about social justice in the academy, because Ahmed provides a rich resource for serious rethinking: ‘My aim is not to suggest that we should stop doing diversity, but that we need to keep asking what we are doing.’” - Meryl Altman, *Academe*

“For those of us interested in diversity work, Ahmed’s *On Being Included* provides a novel way of thinking about diversity. In her readings of institutional documents interwoven with the voices of diversity workers, Ahmed cautions us to think about diversity as a tool deployed to further crystallize institutionally sanctioned racist practices that recede to the background of everyday life.” - Andres Castro Samayoa, *Somatechnics*

“[A] unique account of diversity as an institutional practice and also of what people do and feel when they do not quite fit the norms of an institution or are ‘out of place’. Ahmed captures the experience of diversity in liberal institutions through the image of a coming up against a brick wall and an important part of this book is the ‘physical and emotional’ labour of confronting that wall.” - Karim Murji, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*

“Regardless of positionality and lived experiences, this text is engaging both intellectually and emotionally. Ahmed’s unflinching candor compels reflection and tough (hopefully productive) conversations far more effectively than a conventional ‘diversity document’. This is a text that moves to confront and change the status quo.”

- Corin de Freitas and Alex Pysklywec, *Society and Space, Environment and Planning D*

“Despite having read widely within the ?eld of diversity and higher education, it is rare for a book to so powerfully call to mind my own identities as did this one. . . . This work is most appropriate for an educational anthropology course or unit focused on applied work within higher education. . . . It would also be useful for researchers looking for a new theoretical approach to how discourse and documents perform within institutions or, more provocatively, how they fail to do so.” - Lauren Miller Griffith, *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*

"Just when you think everything that could possibly be said about diversity in higher education has been said, Sara Ahmed comes along with this startlingly original, deeply engaging ethnography of diversity work. *On Being Included* is an insightful, smart reflection on the embodied, profoundly political phenomenology of doing and performing diversity in predominantly white institutions. As Ahmed queers even the most mundane formulations of diversity, she creates one eureka moment after another. I could not put this book down. It is a must-read for everyone committed to antiracist, feminist work as key to institutional transformation in higher education."—**Chandra Talpade Mohanty**, author of *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*

"Sara Ahmed's sensitive and respectful analysis of the complexities faced by diversity workers in higher education institutions arrives at a moment when we urgently need ways to rethink institutional dynamics and the animating effects of policy regimes and processes. This is a vital book: vital as a compass guiding the eye, heart, and mind to the knowledge that can emerge from the labor of institutional transformation, and vital in the sense of being life-giving to those involved in the process."—**Gail Lewis**, coauthor of *Citizenship: Personal Lives and Social Policy*

"There are no other books of this caliber examining the institutional culture of diversity in higher education. Sara Ahmed not only offers a rigorous empirical study of how diversity operates in the real world; she also develops a brilliant theoretical framework exploring the affective reproduction of inequality. At the same time, as a black feminist, she draws on her own embodiment of difference and experience as a diversity practitioner."—**Heidi Safia Mirza**, author of *Race, Gender and Educational Desire: Why Black Women Succeed and Fail*

"Ahmed develops an excellent study for those wishing to view the multiple realities of diversity. Highly recommended. General readers, undergraduate students, graduate students, and professionals."  
(P. Kriese *CHOICE*)

"Ahmed's book is not a how-to guide to 'what works.' But *On Being Included* would be an excellent choice for a faculty-staff reading group about social justice in the academy, because Ahmed provides a rich resource for serious rethinking: 'My aim is not to suggest that we should stop doing diversity, but that we need to keep asking what we are doing.'"  
(Meryl Altman *Academe*)

"Drawing from interviews and informal conversations with higher education diversity practitioners across the United Kingdom and Australia, scholar Sara Ahmed has crafted a keen meditation on the meaning of diversity in higher education and its implications for inclusion.... Focusing on what practitioners can learn about institutions as they work to transform them, her book will be of interest to anyone seeking to promote greater inclusion at their institution."  
(On Campus with Women)

"[T]he book links deeply theoretical questioning to personal experience, empirical findings in interviews, informal discussions and engaged participant observation. It provides the reader with many insights, some created within different varieties of collective intellectual labor that are referred to as discussions in a seminar, meeting or informal talk, that nourish the quest for reading that is simultaneously compelling and delightful. In its combination of theory and practice, the book offers food for thought to theorists and practitioners alike."  
(Anitta Kynsilehto *International Feminist Journal of Politics*)

"*On Being Included* is one of those books that took over my life. It seemed like, for a while, I inserted this text into just about every conversation I had. 'Oh, that's similar to what Sara Ahmed talks about when she says ... ' Maybe it's because I want people to associate me with this brilliant author! It's also partially because this book is really smart about dealing with the ways that terms—specifically, diversity—are taken up within the institution (and she does a neat job of thinking through what institution means) and used to obscure particular kinds of work."  
(Erin Frost *Theorizing Feminist Apparency blog*)

“Despite having read widely within the field of diversity and higher education, it is rare for a book to so powerfully call to mind my own identities as did this one. . . . This work is most appropriate for an educational anthropology course or unit focused on applied work within higher education. . . . It would also be useful for researchers looking for a new theoretical approach to how discourse and documents perform within institutions or, more provocatively, how they fail to do so.”

(Lauren Miller Griffith *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*)

“*On Being Included* does an excellent job of bringing to life, in highly perceptive ways, the experience of doing diversity work. As ethnography, its strength indeed may lie in bracketing other times and places. However, the resonance with other documented experiences in Britain and Australia contributes to the book’s value in offering not just a picture of diversity politics but a vivid account of the persistent features of contemporary organisational life when faced with projects seeking change.”

(Davina Cooper *British Journal of Educational Studies*)

“What is most striking about Ahmed’s work is her detailed analysis of the various paradoxes that result when diversity workers attempt to transform institutions that resist the very transformations diversity workers are hired to put into effect.”

(Tyson E. Lewis *Signs*)

“Regardless of positionality and lived experiences, this text is engaging both intellectually and emotionally. Ahmed’s unflinching candor compels reflection and tough (hopefully productive) conversations far more effectively than a conventional ‘diversity document’. This is a text that moves to confront and change the status quo.”

(Corin de Freitas and Alex Pysklywec *Society and Space: Environment and Planning D*)

“This book offers a grounded and open exploration of what it means to ‘do’ diversity, to ‘be’ diverse. It challenges the reader, both in style and in content, to reconsider relations of power that stick to the multiple practices, meanings, and understandings of diversity, and to reconsider how we engage, reproduce, and disrupt these relations.”

(Juliane Collard and Carolyn Prouse *Gender, Place, and Culture*)

“A key finding in Ahmed’s rich analysis of race relations is how diversity policies can become a mechanism for preserving whiteness. . . . Above all, Ahmed’s corpus of work on race and cultural studies continues to remind us that race is a ‘sticky sign’. . . . The wonder of Ahmed’s book is that it allows us insight into some of the more ephemeral ways whiteness, privilege and institutional discrimination come to operate as normative.”

(Anoop Nayak *British Journal of Sociology of Education*)

#### About the Author

Sara Ahmed is Professor of Race and Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths College, University of London. Her books include *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*; *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*; and *Differences that Matter: Feminist Theory and Postmodernism*.

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This On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life is great book for you because the content which is full of information for you who else always deal with world and still have to make decision every minute. This book reveal it details accurately using great plan word or we can claim no rambling sentences in it. So if you are read that hurriedly you can have whole facts in it. Doesn't mean it only provides straight forward sentences but difficult core information with wonderful delivering sentences. Having On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life in your hand like having the world in your arm, facts in it is not ridiculous just one. We can say that no e-book that offer you world in ten or fifteen tiny right but this e-book already do that. So , this really is good reading book. Hello Mr. and Mrs. active do you still doubt that?

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